



8 April 2021

A year into the pandemic, let's keep going together

Dear members, dear colleagues,

It has been a while since we've been in touch! We had not forgotten you, because, as you know, you are always at the centre of all our attention and concerns, and we wanted to take stock of what has already been done.

It is now more than a year since our professional and private lives have been considerably disrupted by the pandemic, and we hope that, despite the difficult times for many of you, you are holding on and staying the course. In any case, the Staff Union is doing its best, thanks to its large geographical network around the world, to provide collective support or individual advice to all its members so that this unprecedented period goes as smoothly as possible. Unfortunately, the pandemic has sometimes only reinforced certain problems that were already present or exacerbated perceptions of inequality of treatment that are even more difficult to live with.

First of all, with regard to COVID-19, the Committee is of the opinion that it is better to be prepared than to make hasty decisions. This is why it wishes to inform you that, considering the various compulsory teleworking situations which continue in the majority of duty stations, it has formally requested (in February 2021) that discussions take place as soon as possible between the Administration and the Staff Union for a return to the various places of employment. These discussions should be carried out in the framework of the lessons learned from the first return, the new health arrangements (vaccination plan, etc.) and with a view to obtaining a better equality of treatment between departments or duty stations, and greater transparency. To date, the Staff Union Committee has not received any feedback in this regard.

Furthermore, since the beginning of the year, with its new and very enthusiastic and committed members, supported by a network of newly elected union stewards, and taking as a basis the objectives adopted at its General Assembly on 25 February, the Staff Union Committee has spared no effort on all fronts to see how in concrete terms certain advances could be achieved in the short and medium term. A number of priorities were agreed with the Administration in the formal framework of the Joint Negotiating Committee, such as:

- Flexible working arrangements and revision of the current teleworking policy
- Contracts policy reform
- Recruitment and selection including GJDs for Professional Staff and G staff at HQ, and improving diversity

These are ambitious issues that will require long hours of discussion and the provision of recent and usable data for the Staff Union to use in effective negotiations. Both sides also agreed to adopt a pragmatic approach wherever possible so that the first concrete results emerge this year.

However, the Staff Union also has its own priorities, namely to effectively protect and drastically improve the working conditions of colleagues working in technical cooperation projects or on technical cooperation contracts, independently of the discussion on the contracts policy. In the slightest discussion with the Administration on various subjects, the Staff Union now systematically demands that equal treatment be concretely achieved (personal promotions, training plan, recognition of merit, inclusion of persons with disabilities, etc.).

At the international level and within the United Nations common system, the Staff Union Committee is particularly concerned by future decisions that may be taken within the ICSC and relating to future salary surveys, especially in these times of pandemic.

Regarding the future of work of UN staff and the possible modification of contractual situations, as discussed in the High Level Committee of Management, the Staff Union Committee has just received the results of the survey that the staff unions and staff associations had conducted among all UN staff. (To see [the short version please click here](#), to see [the long version with all the comments please click here](#).)

It is always difficult for the Staff Union Committee, at the risk of being sometimes off-putting for its members, to communicate easily and exhaustively on all of its activities, which is why you will also find by [clicking here](#), the speech of the Chairperson of the Staff Union, delivered to the Governing Body on 16 March, which gives you a good overview of the subjects that are of particular concern to your representatives, and on which we expect your support because, as we always repeat, we, the representatives, are only the embodiment of your choices and priorities.

Take good care of yourselves because the road is still long, and rest assured that we are at your side to accompany and support you.
